

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (SEORAC/RAC) Meeting
Minutes July 22, 2002
Burns BLM Office, Hines, OR

RAC Members Present:

Howard Brooks
James Campbell
Ken Bentz
Dick Leever
John Bishop
Mike Golden
Bob Kindschy
Jill Workman
Chad Boyd
Marilyn Miller
Cecil Dick
Walt Van Dyke

Group Number:

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Federal Officials Present:

Dave Henderson, DFO, Vale BLM
Tom Dyer, Burns BLM
Ken Kestner, acting for Steve Ellis,
Lakeview BLM

RAC Members Absent:

Tom Harris
Lee Belknap
Jane O'Keeffe

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Federal Officials Absent:

Steve Ellis, Lakeview BLM
Chuck Graham, Fremont/Winema NF
Roger William, Malheur NF

Guests:

Gary Foulkes, Burns BLM
Tom Dabbs, Lakeview BLM
Carolyn Freeborn, Acting
Steens Proj Mgr, Burns BLM

Berta Youtie, TNC
JR Epps, Fire, BLM
Joan Seevers, OSO BLM

Chuck Joy, Acting ADM, Vale BLM
Mark Armstrong, Burns BLM
Joan Suther, 3 Rivers RA, Burns BLM

JILL WORKMAN, RAC CHAIR, opened the meeting at 8:00 am with self- introductions.

Jill Workman – Minutes

Jill reviewed the previous meeting minutes. Mike Golden moved and Howard Brooks seconded that the minutes be approved, minutes were approved as written.

Tom Dyer -- Wild Horse Issues

- Emphasis is on Steens in the Burns District.
 - Joan Suther introduced as the new Three Rivers Field Manager.
- Burns District Manager (Tom Dyer) is the state representative to the Wild Horse and Burro program.
 - A lot of horses have had to be removed from the drought-affected states increasing the numbers in the holding facilities.
 - Oregon does most of its gathers in the fall and the winter.
 - Oregon needs to keep in the 700 horse gather range to maintain the plan for FY03.
 - Not anticipating meeting this goal.
 - Do not know what impact the wildfires will have had on future gathers.
 - Mahogany fire will impact the horse habitat.
 - Concerned that we will lose more habitat for wild horses as a result of fires this season.

Dave Henderson

- Lots of criteria on how emergency gathers work.
 - Horses that are starving or out of water are the first priority.
 - Current fires have burned two thirds of the Horse Management Area (HMA) causing horses to go outside of HMA areas.
 - Need to evaluate what to do next.
 - Areas with loss of habitat and dried up waterholes, will out compete regular schedules for the gather program money.
 - Drought has changed all wildlife habitats.

Tom Dyer

- This fall's scheduled gathers for the South Steens and Kiger herds will only take place if funds are available.
 - Adoptions are an economic impact to the county.
 - Local motel/restaurants profits from the gather.
 - Longer growing season for grass makes Eastern States better areas for horse adoptions.
 - More and more emphasis on adoptions in the east with several holding areas.
 - Neuter program has been looked at.
 - A pilot program testing a shot that makes mares infertile lasts two years.
 - Problem with the new administration is getting them to understand the importance of the program.

Dave Henderson

- The herds will continue to grow if we do not get them under control.
- Oregon currently has good management of the wild horse program.
- More money is needed for the program to address biological problems and weather systems.
- Drought and wildfires may make the quality of animals go down and that has the potential to effect adoptions.
 - When horse adoption numbers go down, the need for holding facilities increases.
 - This administration is putting a lot of emphasis on increasing the adoptions of horses.
 - Quality herds need enough habbitat to sustain the herds.
 - Poor quality horses are put up for adoption or put back on the range.

**STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(SMAC) UPDATE/WILDHORSE AND BURRO**

Tom Dyer, Designated Federal Official for the SMAC.

- The SMAC is currently reviewing the NEPA documents.
 - They get a week to review and get their comments back to BLM.
 - SMAC is the advisory group for the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA) and takes premise over the RAC in the Steens area.
 - SEOR-RAC members still have the opportunity to go to the SMAC meetings.
 - Documents/information relating to the Steens should go to the SMAC before the RAC.

- RAC needs to be knowledgeable of Steens issues, especially in the planning area or Resource Management Plan (RMP) area.
- Anticipates that RMP decision issues will go to the RAC and the SMAC at the same time.

Jill Workman

- Tom Harris has not had the opportunity yet to ask the SMAC what they feel the role of the RAC will be. He will do this at their next meeting and then report to the RAC.

Carolyn Freeborn

- Steens Project Area
 - Fencing/project implementation is going well this year.
 - Wells have been drilled and water holes have been established.
 - Fences are being constructed and others laid out.
 - Big project for next year is Kiger fence.
 - Will need to build a wood fence and will be a challenge to make this happen.
 - Shift of grazing areas will be done.
 - Currently working under a tight timeframe because some 60 miles of fencing needs to be removed.
 - Heavy equipment cannot be used and fencing will need to be hauled out by packhorses.
 - Some fencing is already on the ground, which also needs to be removed.
 - Need to find and map these areas.
 - Contracts will need to be implemented.
 - Finding volunteer help may be difficult because of the large area and the steepness of the area.
 - Need to make fences that are easily maintained and as cow tight as possible, so the cows will not get into the no grazing areas.

Marilyn Miller

- Suggested another option, to have the volunteers take the fences down and stockpile them in a safe area that would not impact animals or people.

Carolyn Freeborn

- Access to the wilderness has drawn a lot of interest.
 - Second go around- it is not looking to good for additional legislation on more land exchanges.
 - The five land exchanges identified in the legislation have been completed.
 - The Sisters exchange is dead because of the stream involved.
 - Hoping for funding in the future to help with exchanges.
 - Emphasis is on acquisition and easements or conservation easements pertaining to building.
 - Use is down in all areas, should pick up more in August.
 - Use is also down in private campgrounds private and the local bed and breakfast.
 - Backcountry use seems to be up.

- Running camp-current issue is 100-150 runners (This group has been doing this run for the past 27 years-they already have a permit good until 2004) running through the canyon.
 - NEPA document will need to be done with mitigation.
 - A big issue because of the new legislation on the Steens.
 - Each session has a day that runs down through the canyon, this is what is drawing the focus from the environmental groups.

Tom Dyer

- Suggests is that we wait for the NEPA document to see what damage may occur.
 - Loop road maintenance issues, according to the public, is either the road is too rough or not rough enough.
 - The Legislation specified that BLM is to maintain as we are currently doing.
 - BLM's budget for this road is up to \$75,000 per year.
 - The BLM is going to put up more and more signing including a kiosk to warn folks of the road conditions.
 - Cold Springs, a route located outside of the wilderness, is in bad condition.
 - BLM is looking at doing minor maintenance to fill in the ruts to help with the safety issues.

WILDFIRE WORK/REST POLICY-Handout #1

Dave Henderson

- Because of the 30-mile firefighter deaths last year, new guidelines have come out to protect firefighters.
- BLM has adopted the same rules as the Forest Service.
 - Any hours a firefighter works over 16 hours must be pre-approved by the Incident Commander.
 - Any hours a firefighter works over 24 hours only allowed if there is danger to life not property.
 - This is becoming an issue already because this applies to everyone.
 - When multiple fires occur there may be places that BLM will not be able to fight fire because there will not be enough resources.
 - Results of not being able to fight the fires on a timely basis, is becoming an issues.
 - Need to train more folks to help with fires.
 - BLM is short on dozer and helicopter bosses; dozers/helicopters cannot be used without them.
- For whatever reason a group of folks have picked up the notion that we do not fight fire aggressively in wilderness study areas (WSAs).
 - We do fight fires in WSAs using a lot of aircraft, but can also use heavy equipment.
 - BLM fights fire with a light hand in the WSAs.
 - Strategy for managing event has to go through a different process because of rehabilitation requirements but generally does not slow fire fighting.
- Contract folks also have to play by the new rules on the work/rest policy.
 - Everyone needs to know that we play by these rules.
- Fuels management around the urban interface is being done and it is going well.
- Bigger challenge is to get out of the urban interface and try to control the large cheat grass areas.
 - Fire rehab projects make take several years to get enough rain to make these areas better.

- Fire funding is holding it's own.
- Vale District currently has 15-20 fuels treatment projects planned.

Tom Dabbs

- Need to try green strips to get ahead of the fires and not be reactive only.
 - BLM has a lawsuit on a rehabilitation project done last year that used some non-native grasses.

SAGE GROUSE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Chad Boyd

- Committee met on July 9.
- Resolution to add a tribal, conservation and private lands representative to the committee.
 - Three votes were taken.
 - They only voted to add a private lands representative to the committee.
- Final outline for the Sage Grouse Plan was completed.
- Questions on how the actions may affect other species.
- One of the items discussed was lek counts.
 - Most of the states used lek counts as the breeding counts.
 - Male grouse do not come into the leks everyday.
 - Baseline is under estimated.
 - Indices are basically what they have.
 - We are making a minimum number estimate.
 - A lot of birds never go to the lek.
 - Conclusion is that we have more birds out there than we knew about.
 - These counts can still be used to tell you what is up or down.
 - Malheur County has about 300 strutting grounds.
 - There currently is research going on the genetics of the sub species.
 - Fish and Wildlife folks are going to go slow on this.
 - Next Committee meeting will be on September 12 in Bend.
 - Funding opportunities can include wildlife and wetland programs to include rehabilitation improvement and there is a need to obligate these dollars this fiscal 2002.
 - Process is to get the funding and then Walt will start writing a plan that will take 1-2 years to get done.
 - Hope to get a draft out and get on the road to get ok. Looking at getting Walt an office space at Vale or Ontario.

NATIVE PLANT INIATIVE

Joan Seevers, Oregon State Office

- Important for all of communities to know about the Native plant material development program.
- Federal Agencies were told to develop this program in 2000.
 - Program is to be a large-scale program including being a part of fire rehabilitation program.
 - Important in our agency not just fire rehabilitation but to have wildlife, and endangered species programs working together with fire.
 - State director send out policy on the Native Plant Program.

- Policy is if at all possible we will use native species.
 - There is never enough native plant seed to do all the projects.
- This will be a long-term program to develop native plant species.
 - Washington Office has set up different types of programs-native seed network.
 - Collecting natives and growing them out.
- Track what growers have and where we came from.
- Prices always go up when there is a big need.
- The house conference report on wild land fire provided funding.
- 2001 a Botanist was hired and provided with 5 million dollars to get some of these projects done.
- In August Oregon got additional dollars for the programs.
- A lot of dollars went into developing projects on the west side of Oregon.
 - They get rain and water to irrigate at the nurseries.
- Contracts to grow seedlings were established.
- OR/WA counties do not have a species list and there is hope to get these dollars to fund development of these lists.
- Western Oregon districts have existing contracts so they got the largest amount of dollars.
- Burns completed the Jack Creek Project.
 - Large showy project.
 - Another on the Spokane district too.
- Multi agencies were involved in projects in this area.
- This year BLM got \$600,000.
 - WO said we needed an Integrated plan for eastern Oregon.
 - Idaho has a Great Basin Plan that could be used as a model.
 - Need title and do district by district individually and also as combined districts. Rangeland health, wildlife, weeds need to all fit together.
- Need to get a team together to start working on the eastside plan.
 - Berta Youtie, Conservancy may help coordinate team for BLM.
 - Berta has been involved with growing these plants for many years.
 - Berta wants to meet with the Botanist to develop a plan.
 - Tom Dyer- this may be an opportunity to use the county payment funds.
 - Need to see what the districts need and what the role is for the agencies.
 - Hope to get dollars from Washington Office for next year.
 - Need to cross administer boundaries.
 - Washington Office wants a plan that includes all of the eastern Oregon.
 - Proposal to cover all districts.
 - May cover partnerships with growers.
 - Part of a larger plan.
 - One umbrella plan for the eastern districts.
- Restoration rehabilitation program will let growers gear up for the program.
- Forest Service has a seed cleaning machine in Bend that helps other agencies.
- Seed companies are asking for guarantees that we will purchase the seed that they grow.
- Collecting the right seed is very important.
- Issue of how long seed lasts, in storage.
- Problem in this area is rainfall.
 - Suggestion has anyone looked into seed coating that will only break down when a certain amount of moisture would activate the seed.

- What we need to do is get non-native perennial grasses established to keep the cheat grass and weeds out, then later reestablish native seeds.
- Need to look at different strategies and see what will work.

ANDREWS RMP

Gary Foulkes

- We have until October 2004 to get the Resource Management Plan (RMP) done.
 - Scoping has been done.
- Received about 4000 comments.
 - 3000 mostly form letters.
 - 22 actual areas of comment-under review now.
- Lots of time was spent on working on resource goals and objectives.
- A newsletter is at the printer being printed.
 - It has the goals and objectives with fundamental criteria that will be followed with alternatives.
- Changed alternative D because of input from the county.
 - County gave us a sixth alternative and Gary rewrote and presented to Judge Steve Gratsy and he love it.
- Preferred alternative will be picked that will come out with the draft.
- Not tied to one alternative.
- Parts of several alternatives can be selected-BLM does not have to go with one completely.
- Read the two documents-email handout.
- He will get out what is planned to do.
- Full id team meeting will be next Monday then he will get these sent out.
- RAC needs to give comments to him on the goals and objectives by Aug 23, sooner if possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No one signed up to speak

Ken Kestner, Acting for Steve Ellis Lakeview BLM

- Three major fires on the Lakeview District
 - Winter Fire
 - Toolbox Fire
 - Silver Fire
- The Winter Fire and the Toolbox Fire merged.
 - Type 1 team from California managing the Winter Fire and the top of the Toolbox Fire.
- Major threat to a microwave site.
- Silverlake was never evacuated.

Subcommittees met from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

Subcommittee Members:

North Lake Recreation Plan (1)	Jane O'Keeffe, Marilyn Miller, Dick Leever, and Tom Harris
Birch Creek Management Plan (5H)	Marilyn Miller, Jill Workman, John Bishop and

	Jim Campbell
Malheur County Wildland Fire Board (5E/F) BLM	Walt Van Dyke, Bob Kindschy, John Bishop and Dick Leever
Rangeland Health Assessment BLM All (5G)	Walt Van Dyke, Jill Workman, Chad Boyd and Ken Bentz

NORTH LAKE RECREATION PLAN REPORT:

Ken Kestner

- There is a need to come up with multi spectrum recreation, bird watching, hunting, etc.
- Area draws everything north of Picture Rock Pass including Silverlake.
- Need to educate public to appreciation of area.
- Increase the BLM presence.
- Promote area in a positive context.
- Create a better transportation plan.
- RAC will provide expertise.
- Would like to plan a field trip to the area for the subcommittee members.
- Working with the OHV group.
- Educate on how to safely use the area.
- Need to work with the management plan.
- Suggestion to meet the local folks by having meetings with the grange.

BIRCH CREEK MANAGEMENT PLAN:

Jill Workman

- Suggestion is to take a raft trip down the Owyhee and take out at Birch Creek to help committee understand what the issues are.
- Two historic ranches are there.
- May need to bring the buildings up to code.
- May need to address the access issues.
 - Road access a problem at various times of the year.
- Public wants to know why they cannot stay in the cabins.
- More research needs to be done on the issues.
- Cost of doing the improvements.
 - Committee needs estimates from the BLM on this.

MALHEUR COUNTY WILDLAND FIRE BOARD:

Bob Kindschy

- BLM is looking for guidance to involve other publics with rangeland interface.
- Should cover adjacent counties.
- Rural fire districts need to be involved.
- Blm is the resource for this information.
- Get these folks together on who would do what and when for initial attack.
- Need to get a Memo of Understanding or public relations type of deal.
- Would like to see rangeland restoration issues involved in this.
- Mention was made that there is an inoculation available that does not allow cheat grass and medusa to grow.

- Need to research this.
- There are some good demo sites where this is already happening.
- This could potentially allow us to control cheat grass and medusa.
- Lasts for two years.
- Does not harm soil.
- If it works it would be wonderful.
- This is not on BLM's list of chemicals that can be used.
- There is a national EIS being done now and BLM is hoping for the toxicology studies that will let us introduce other herbicides.
- Oregon BLM is 10 years behind other folks on using up to date chemicals to control weeds, due to District Court decision.

RANGELAND HEALTH ASSESSMENT BLM ALL:

Tom Dabbs

- Vale is doing their assessments on the watersheds.
- Deadline for assessment completion is 2007.
- Need help in streamlining or simplifying the process.
- Need to keep the Malheur Cattleman's Association in the loop.
- Make defensible decisions.
- Bully Creek is the first assessment done.
 - Go back to them and ask what they would like us to do differently the next time.
- Are other areas having trouble meeting these guidelines?
- Committee wants to have a meeting with the other districts before the next RAC meeting.
- Might be a good thing to bring in someone from the state office for the meeting.
- Lakeview would like to see consistency in how the districts address these issues.

AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR ROUNDTABLE

Ken Kestner, Acting for Steve Ellis, Lakeview District Manager

- Lakeview's RMP is completed and now waiting for the Federal Register process to be completed before the plan can be printed.

Joan Suther-Three Rivers Resource Area

- In the Andrews/Steens area there is currently paving being done on the approaches to bridges.
- Long-term deferred maintenance is scheduled.
- Implementation on the Steens may have a delay in contracts being completed, because of fire danger.
- 3 Rivers RA fence projects have been completed, and the recreation program trial run is on the south end of the Malheur Forest and a small part of BLM.
- Project has been completed on the fishing platform (removed, rebuilt, then returned to the lake) at the Delintment Lake.
- Fire season is impacting all projects on the district this year.
- Because of the short growing season this year approximately 50% of permittees have left early.
 - Some go to private ground, higher ground or other leased lands.

Tom Dyer, Burns District Manager

- 82 folks are currently working off district on fire assignments.
- Equipment that remains here is the minimum coverage for initial attack.
 - Burns is holding 8 engines for initial attack for 5 million acres.
 - Burns District may have gone to far by sending 50% of the folks to fires.
- Burns on has had only had 33 fires (all lightning caused) this season.
- A good amount of precipitation has been received with the lightening.
- Heads up there is a lot of potential for more fires here in Eastern Oregon.
- Burns has 5 contract engines on the Malheur.

Dave Henderson, Vale District Manager

- Fire is running our lives and it is to early.
- Lot of other things not getting done because of wildfires.
- BLM is getting some relief from Washington on deadlines because of the wildfires.
- Rehabilitation acres this fire season is upwards of 100,000 acres, caused by wildfires.
 - Policy is that these rehabilitation plans will be in effect within 30 days of the fire.
- Wayne Wetzel, Vale's new planner will be on board next Monday.
 - Wayne will be involved in the implementation of the Southeast Oregon RMP, and coordination of Baker RMP, with Prineville and John Day RMPs.
- Vale is rerunning the public affairs position for the District office.
- Vale has received additional funds to deal with hazardous wastes and abandoned land mines.
 - Dollars to work on these have timeframes that we cannot deal with.
 - Takes special engineering to get rid of the hazardous waste.
 - Contract is so technical it is hard to find someone with the skills to write the contract.
 - We have two of these hazardous sites that need taken care of as soon as possible.
- Vale involved in arranging the logistics of a weed meeting in Lewiston, Idaho.
 - Yellow star thistle is a disaster to pristine rangeland.
 - Point behind the issue is to standardize the process.
 - Lots of other noxious varieties out there.
 - You need to treat weeds and put something else there or the weeds will come back worse.
 - Treating sites after weed treatment.
- Dates for signing the SEOR-RMP can happen any day.
 - No appeals yet.
- Hope to have the RAC appointments completed by September.
 - Howard Brooks did not reapply for the RAC
 - Jane O'Keeffe lost re-election, so she is not eligible to continue with the RAC.
- The new State Director for Oregon BLM is Elaine Marquis-Brong.

MEETING DATES

- The next RAC meeting will be in Burns on Friday, October 18, 2002.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

- Subcommittees meet during the RAC meeting.
 - Allow two hours during the meeting for the members being on two committees.
- Report to RAC on implementation of Standards and Guidelines.

- Would like to have Lakeview and Burns person meet with them also.
- SMAC interaction with RAC
- Set schedule for 2003 RAC meetings.
- Suggestions for future field trip: recreation docks put on the lake, fire rehab, pipelines, wells
- Suggestion that we have a field trip in Christmas Valley at the May meeting.

FOLLOWUP ACTIONS:

- Cost estimates on Birch Creek improvements.
- Rangeland Health Assessment Subcommittee wants to meet with other BLM Districts to see what they are doing.

Meeting adjourned